



January 14, 2002

To: All FSA, NRCS & RD Employees, Oregon

Purpose

To remind all employees of policy regarding the use of USDA telecommunications services, equipment, and resources in Oregon.

Background

Federal employees may use Government office equipment for authorized purposes only. As set forth below, limited personal use of the government office equipment by employees during personal time is considered to be an "authorized use" of Government property.

USDA is allowing limited personal use of government property in an effort to create a more supportive work environment. This policy does not create a right to use government office equipment for non-government purposes.

Government office equipment includes personal computers and related peripheral equipment and software, library resources, telephones, facsimile machines, photocopiers, office supplies, Internet connectivity and access to Internet services, and e-mail.

Policy

This policy authorizes the limited personal use of telecommunications resources by USDA employees in the workplace on an occasional basis provided that the use involves minimal expense to the Government and does not interfere with official business.

Employees shall exercise common sense and good judgment in the personal use of telecommunications resources. Official Government business always takes precedence over the personal use of telecommunications resources.

Occasional personal use of telecommunications resources shall take place during the employees' personal time, i.e., non-work hours such as before or after work, lunch periods, or weekends. An employee's personal use of government office equipment is limited to those situations where the government is already providing equipment or services and the employee's use of such equipment or services will not result in any additional expense to the government or the use will result in only normal wear and tear or the use of small amounts of electricity, ink, toner or paper. The privilege does not extend to modifying such equipment, e.g., loading personal software or making configuration changes.

Telecommunications resources and official time shall not be used to earn outside income or for private gain. Employees may, however, make limited use of government office equipment to check their Thrift Savings Plan or other personal investments, or to seek employment, or communicate with a volunteer charity organization, for example.

Employees are specifically prohibited from using government office equipment to maintain or support a personal private business or using government office equipment to assist relatives, friends, or other persons in such activities.

It is the responsibility of employees to ensure they are not giving the false impression that they are acting in an official capacity when they are making personal use of government office equipment. If there is expectation that such personal use could be interpreted to represent USDA, then an adequate disclaimer must be used, e.g., "The contents of this message are mine personally and do not reflect any position of the Government or USDA."

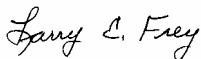
Employees do not have a right, nor should they have an expectation, of privacy while using any Government office equipment at any time, including accessing the Internet or using e-mail. To the extent that employees wish their private activities remain private, they should avoid using government office equipment. By using Government office equipment, employees imply their consent to disclosing the contents of any files or information maintained or passed through that equipment.

By using government office equipment, consent to monitoring and recording is implied with or without cause, including (but not limited to) accessing the Internet or using e-mail. Any use of government communications resources is made with the understanding that such use is generally not secure, is not private, and is not anonymous.

System managers employ monitoring tools to detect improper use. Electronic communications may be disclosed within an agency or department to employees who have a need to know in the performance of their duties. Agency officials, such as system managers and supervisors, may access any electronic communications.

While the occasional use of telecommunications resources in moderation is acceptable, uses not conforming with this policy are strictly prohibited. Employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally in the workplace and to refrain from using telecommunications resources for activities that are inappropriate or offensive to co-workers or the public, such as the use of sexually explicit materials or remarks that ridicule others on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, sex, handicap, national origin, or sexual orientation.

The privilege to use Government office equipment for personal purposes may be revoked or limited at any time by the appropriate agency. Employees abusing the privilege outlined in this policy are subject to revocation of this privilege and all appropriate disciplinary measures.



LARRY FREY
State Director
USDA-FSA



BOB GRAHAM
State Conservationist
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/signed/

LYNN SCHOESSLER
State Executive Director
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